



Jayhawk Chapter MOAA Newsletter



This newsletter is published bimonthly by the Jayhawk Chapter of Kansas, Military Officers Association of America, as a service to all members. The Jayhawk emblem is used with the permission of the registered trademark owner, the University of Kansas. The newsletter is only as good as the material available, so each member is requested to forward news and other items of interest to the editors.

March Program:

Raymond Geselbracht, Special Assistant to the Director of the Harry S. Truman Library & Museum in Independence, is an expert on Truman and has a slide presentation that takes the audience on a pictorial tour of the buildings and places in and around Kansas City that were near and dear to Truman. This provides some insight to local color that Truman loved in KC along with personal anecdotes about Truman the man.

4-STAR CHAPTER - 2005
5-STAR CHAPTER - 2003/2004

WEBSITE AWARD - 2004
NEWSLETTER AWARD - 2003

President's Corner

by *Erv Hodges*



Greetings, Jayhawk Chapter:

I would like to start this first letter by thanking Bob Longino, the Officers and Board of 2005 for the leadership they provided throughout the year. The Chapter had a most successful and rewarding year.

As with any new job we must first look at the mission. Our By-Laws state that the purposes of our Chapter will be to promote the objectives of the Military Officers Association of America; foster fraternal relations among retired, active and former officers of the uniformed services; protect the rights and interests of personnel of the uniformed services and their dependents and survivors; provide useful services for members and their dependents and survivors and serve the community and the nation.

In order to accomplish our mission we must capture the interest and participation of our members. Mike Sullivan has done a wonderful job in obtaining exciting and interesting program speakers that should interest all. The March program will bring the Special Assistant to the Director of the Truman Library to acquaint us with the displays and programs available at that institution.

The May program is especially exciting in that Mike has been able to bring General Richard Myers, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for our meeting on Wednesday, May 17. Please note the meeting has been changed from Tuesday May 16 to Wednesday in order to meet General Myers' schedule. We will also be hosting several Cadets and Midshipmen at that meeting.

In the coming months we will be encouraging our members to participate in several programs that will impact our community. Among these opportunities are the scholarship program for the local ROTC members and the Habitat for Humanity development being named for a long-time member of our chapter, Major General Comfort.

I look forward to an active and interesting year. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance to you.

Erv Hodges

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1 March 2006

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*** Reservations should be sent to Jim Cooper by 18 March.**



JAYHAWK CHAPTER NEWS

DUES FOR 2006 ARE NOW PAYABLE

**IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY DONE SO,
PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR CHECK FOR \$20 WITH YOUR DINNER RESERVATION
OR MAIL SEPARATELY TO CAPT. JIM COOPER, 1115 STONE MEADOWS DRIVE, LAWRENCE 66049-3961**

MG Clay Comfort Scholarship - Call for Contributions

We are now collecting contributions for our own MG Clay Comfort ROTC scholarship fund. Our intention is to raise sufficient funds to cover three \$250 scholarships (a total of \$750), one each to the Navy/Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force ROTC units at the University of Kansas. We would like to raise enough so that we can make awards this Spring. Please consider making a contribution, as this is your chapter's project, designed to benefit future officers in training for service to the Nation. Your check should be made out to "KU Endowment", and you should annotate your check in the "Memo" or "For" space in the lower left corner with "MG Clay Comfort Fund". These contributions are tax-deductible, and the KU Endowment Association will issue tax receipts to us after we collect the checks and turn them in.

Mail your check to: Jim Cooper, 1115 Stone Meadows Drive, Lawrence, Kansas 66049-3961. Jim will also be accepting contributions at the March dinner meeting. Please make this check out separately from your dinner payment and dues checks.

Thanks for your support.

Jerry and Barb Goforth report: We spent our 8th winter in Corpus Christi, TX. Why you might ask? After spending these cold months in California, Florida, Arizona, over the years, we found this to be the best place for us to enjoy ourselves.

Generally our temps are 20 to 30 degrees warmer than Kansas; it costs less than \$10.00 to play 18 holes of golf; and we live on Corpus Christi Beach near many attractions, including the USS Lexington "The Blue Ghost" Museum On The Bay, where I volunteer once a week. We also spend some time at the Naval Air Station CC and Padre Island.

Best of all, we are called "Winter Texans" and not "Snowbirds" – they really appreciate our economic impact.

From **Alan Van Loenen**: I again want to remind all fellow members of the Lawrence MOAA that all members and guests are welcome to attend the Sgt Samuel J. Churchill SUV (Sons of Union Veterans) meetings every third Thursday of each month at Watkins History Museum. The SUV Lawrence Camp has guest speakers at most meetings presenting subject matter related to the U.S. Civil War.

SUV camp meeting starts at 7:00 PM, with speaker programs starting at around 7:30 PM. The SUV camp meeting programs are listed in the Lawrence Journal-World the week of the meeting in the "Around Town" or "What's Happening" section of the Lawrence LJW.

Your Editors have just returned after "escaping" the "winter" weather of Kansas for five weeks – although we understand it was just about as warm at home. Our first stop was in San Antonio for a weekend with Shirley's aunt; then down to the Rio Grande Valley for two weeks of golf with friends from here in Kansas (Emporia, LeCompton & Topeka). From there we ventured to Arizona to see Shirley's cousin and spend a couple of days with John's sister, California for a few days with his cousin, and back through Las Vegas to see his brother.

In all, we covered 6,106 miles and played golf on nine different courses in four states. It is good to be home – but did you have to request a three (3) degree low just to make us feel welcome?? ☺

Groundbreaking for Comfort Neighborhood 16 Units in the 800 Block of Walnut 20 February 2006



L to R: Jill Shelly, President of the Habitat Board; Mark Engleman, Project Manager; Gordon Longabach; Lawrence Comfort, grandsons Ian and Timothy, and Ardis Comfort



Navy News

CDR Chris Orwoll, USN



Greetings from the Jayhawk Navy,

Based on the weather today (65 degrees & sunny), it's either time for graduation and commissioning or it's February and the "gods of weather" have smiled upon us. Outside my office window are the first shorts and flip-flop sightings of the spring semester...it can't last. Anyway, it's been a great beginning to the semester. We've done some revamping of our weekly "laboratory" for the Midshipmen and the change seems to be working out for the better. We had a very dynamic event with RADM Alford, who is the Pacific Command Chief of Staff. He addressed the Battalion on the Surface Warfare community and then brought them up to speed on the status of the entire Pacific Theatre, which encompasses the sea, air and land masses from San Diego all the way to Madagascar. The Mids had many insightful questions and we wish that we'd had more time with the Admiral.

The Battalion CO and his staff have made a significant effort to upgrade the weekly laboratory periods on Wednesdays. Last week, they set up six

stations throughout the Military Science Building where every Midshipman, Officer Candidate, and MECEP was given a chance to lead a small group of their peers in solving complex (some were virtually unsolvable), yet fun problems involving critical thinking skills. The Battalion had an enjoyable time and learned a lot about small unit leadership. Next week, we are challenging them with personnel problem scenarios from the Fleet that they will have to work their way through over the entire semester. This will be a challenge for both the staff and the midshipmen.

On a more somber note, our Aviation Lieutenant, Laura Glenn, will be leaving for Iraq this April to conduct anti-IED operations in country. She will be sorely missed here and we will be praying for her.

Cheers from the Jayhawk Navy. Go KU, Beat Texas!! (and everybody else)

CDR Chris Orwoll, USN



Air Force News

LtCol Sandra Leiker, USAF

Happy New Year MOAA!

It's 2006 and the spring semester for AFROTC at KU holds tremendous excitement! The seniors are just months from graduating, the juniors have taken huge strides in their leadership roles in the cadet corps, the sophomores are field-training camp bound this summer and training hard for it (read that as "learning to fold t-shirts into tiny squares, shine shoes, starch shirts, and make beds with tidy corner folds in less than a minute!), and the freshman, well, the freshman no longer look "new" and they are really starting to contribute to the corps with their fresh ideas and energy! And, thanks to an "excellent" rating on our recent (mid-Jan) inspection, I think I can even say with some honesty that the Cadre look refreshed! Well, they look refreshed because it's over - the rating's just icing on the cake.

One of the great new things about this semester is that we are back to being fully manned! SSgt Crystal Cronley joined us on Jan 6th as our NCO for Personnel. She is cheery and energetic and talented at her job and has dived right in, which is especially great, since, having lived almost her entire life in California or Florida, she could be having major culture shock (read that as "It is very COLD here in Lawrence, Kansas, compared to Pensacola, Florida," where she PCS'd from after working with the Navy's Cryptology Training School.) She is a breath of fresh air to the staff and cadets – we are certainly lucky to have her here at KU.

The cadet wing leadership "turned over" with the start of the new term, giving the program a whole new dynamic. I don't know if the other ROTC programs

work the same way, but our cadets compete for leadership positions in the corps and then the senior leaders "staff" all of the positions under them. They develop their own plans and goals for the semester - and it is really great to see some of the cadets who were quiet last semester really blossoming and working to implement great new programs. It's exciting for me to watch them all develop in their leadership skills and to see their confidence grow as they realize what they are able to accomplish! I guess that is really what it is all about.

So quite a few fun training events are upcoming (really, I mean it! Laser Tag is fun, right? I just hope they don't make ME play!) We have a SERE exercise planned for a weekend in mid-April out near Clinton Lake - active duty volunteers from Whiteman AFB will come out to train the cadets; a 4-day base visit to Tyndall AFB in Panama City, Florida, over Spring Break (where else could you possibly want to be during Spring Break?); the National Character and Leadership

Symposium at the US Air Force Academy which a number of our cadets will get to attend out in Colorado Springs and a Dining-In (fabulous guest speaker to be announced...) to be held at the Hereford House restaurant here in Lawrence near the end of April.

I do believe this semester actually "feels" a little lighter...that may just relate to my having made it through my first entire semester (the rest is down hill, right?), or it may be (as I mentioned above) that we're trying to have a little bit of "fun" with our training! But balanced against that "lightness" is a sense of the incredible importance of what we are doing as the "finish line" approaches for those who will commission in May. I feel sincerely privileged to be able to watch the cadets grow towards officership and I feel the most enormous sense of pride in them and in what we are accomplishing.

Thanks for your support!

Lt Col Sandra J. Leiker



Army News *LTC Jeff Maxcy*

Greetings, Jayhawk Chapter!

The Army ROTC unit at KU enjoyed a long and productive holiday break. However, with the new semester, the cadets have eagerly anticipated new training challenges and have not been disappointed.

On the first day of the semester, the cadets participated in a Warrior Squad Competition which encouraged teamwork in a fun environment. Second platoon was awarded the Warrior Streamer for its outstanding performance. The cadets also tested their physical fitness after the long holiday by completing a diagnostic APFT. During labs, cadets have been working on troop leading procedures, land navigation, battle drills, and squad situational training exercise. Because the Jayhawk Battalion has the honor of raising and lowering the flag outside the military science building in March, the cadets also trained on drill and ceremony.

The Jayhawk Battalion is looking forward to the rest of the semester. We have many challenging activities including the Bataan Death March in March, the FTX in April and the Ranger Buddy Team Competition on 29 April 2005. We invite each of you to attend the Buddy Team Competition to see the outstanding dedication and skills of cadets from around the country.

Check out our website at www.ku.edu/~kurotc/ for our upcoming events.

JAYHAWKS LEAD THE WAY!

LTC Jeff Maxcy

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**WHY ENGLISH ISN'T EASY**

- The bandage was wound around the wound.
- The farm was used to produce produce.
- The dump was so full it had to refuse more refuse.
- A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- I did not object to the object.
- The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- They were too close to the door to close it.
- The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
- Upon seeing the tear in the painting, I shed a tear.
- I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.

## MOAA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

### MOAA's Legislative Update for Friday, January 6, 2006:

#### Issue 1: 2005 Gains and 2006 Goals

We had some bitter disappointments at the end of 2005 when Congress' final FY2006 Defense Authorization Act dropped Senate-passed initiatives that would:

- \* End deduction of VA survivor benefits from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities when a member dies of conditions caused by service;
- \* End SBP premium payments for "Greatest Generation" retirees who already have paid more SBP premiums than post-1978 retirees will ever have to; and
- \* Provide full, immediate concurrent receipt for otherwise qualifying disabled retirees deemed "unemployable" by the VA (the House provision adopted provides full retired pay by October 1, 2009 instead).

But we can't let these disappointments cloud the fact that we achieved some significant victories in other areas. While the progress was more modest than we had hoped on some issues, we need to recognize it as positive action, nevertheless.

For a one-page summary of selected (2005 gains), visit MOAA's Web site at

[http://moaaonline.org/ct/X1z\\_irK1DRtt/](http://moaaonline.org/ct/X1z_irK1DRtt/)

Obviously, we'll continue work this year on areas where last year's action fell short. Check out a one-page synopsis of key (2006 goals) at

[http://moaaonline.org/ct/Bpz\\_irK1DRt5/](http://moaaonline.org/ct/Bpz_irK1DRt5/)

### MOAA Legislative Update for Friday, January 13, 2006:

#### Issue 1: Pentagon Health Chief Defends Retiree Fee Increases.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) visited Military Coalition representatives on January 11, to defend plans for a major hike in retiree health fees. He said military health care benefits are "extremely rich" and consume funding needed for other defense programs. MOAA and others took the opportunity to offer some candid comments. See suggested message to Congress below.

To their credit, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) Dr. William Winkenwerder and his principal deputy, Dr. Steve Jones, went out of their way to talk to military association representatives about why the Defense Department wants to double or triple TRICARE fees for retired beneficiaries. They came to Alexandria, Virginia to spend an hour with more than 50 representatives of The Military Coalition, including several from MOAA.

But it was a frustrating meeting on both sides, as Coalition members had lots of questions about the specifics of the new proposals that Winkenwerder said he couldn't yet answer. While MOAA and others have published summaries of the DoD plan received from multiple reliable sources (see [http://moaaonline.org/ct/711hioF1ZXgy/TRICARE\\_Fee\\_Increases](http://moaaonline.org/ct/711hioF1ZXgy/TRICARE_Fee_Increases)), the official plan may not be released until the

President submits his budget for FY07 later this month or in early February.

#### Issue 2: President Signs Defense Bill Into Law.

MOAA offers a comprehensive summary of how the new FY2006 Defense Authorization Act resolved House vs. Senate differences on more than 100 issues affecting active duty, Guard, Reserve, and retired members and survivors.

On Friday, January 6, President Bush signed the FY2006 National Defense Authorization Act into law (Public Law 109-163).

We've previously summarized some selected highlights of this important legislation, but have now completed a more detailed synopsis of how the final bill resolved more than 100 differences between the previous versions passed by the House and Senate.

View the summary of

[http://moaaonline.org/ct/771hioF1ZXgn/MOAA's\\_2006\\_Legislative\\_Goals\\_\(pdf\)](http://moaaonline.org/ct/771hioF1ZXgn/MOAA's_2006_Legislative_Goals_(pdf)).

### MOAA's Legislative Update for Friday, January 20, 2006:

#### Issue 1: Wounded Warriors Testify

The Veterans Disability Benefits Commission held its first public hearing of the year on January 19 to review research plans and hear testimony from soldiers receiving care from Walter Reed and VA facilities.

The witnesses provided riveting testimony of their personal challenges and offered recommendations to improve patient management and coordination of information and services between the military and the VA.

"Seamless transition" between the military and VA programs featured prominently in their testimony. Four of the servicemembers suffered amputations after being wounded in Iraq. Sergeant Edward Wade, USA (Ret) of the 82d Airborne Division, also suffered a severe traumatic brain injury (TBI). SGT Wade obtains care for his TBI at the VA Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia. But his spouse, Sarah, told the Commission she had to battle the Army to obtain care for her husband's lost right arm at Walter Reed. The Defense Department has plans to build "poly-trauma" centers at Walter Reed and two other locations.

#### Issue 2: MOAA Addresses Spouse Convention

CinCHouse, a non-profit organization of primarily military spouses, sponsored a conference the second week of January to exchange ideas between military families and military leaders. The purpose was to raise awareness of retention and family support policies, recognizing that over half of the current force is married or has family responsibilities.

MOAA's President, VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret), participated as a guest speaker on a panel addressing the topic, "Do Pay and Benefits Impact Recruitment and Retention?" Ryan helped lead a lively discussion about the quality of life of men and women serving today and those who have served in the past.

Ryan highlighted the effects leadership can have on recruiting and retention and the idea that every policy decision should consider the spouse and family. One government official said family programs tend to be the first ones cut during tough budget times like these. Others, including VADM Ryan, countered that, if defense leaders believe what they say about the importance of military people and families, they should be willing to make the appropriate investment in them.

"It all starts with an adequate defense budget," Ryan said. He highlighted the seeming misalignment of national budget priorities, in that today's wartime defense budget is less than 4% of our gross domestic product. That's much lower than the 5.7% average -- counting only peacetime years -- for the six decades since the end of World War II.

"The only weapon system that has never let this country down is our military personnel and their families," said Ryan, indicating his disagreement with those who contend the military has to cut people programs to pay for weapons.

### Issue 3: Wanted: GI Bill for the 21st Century

The Military Coalition, major veterans service organizations, and higher education associations are teaming up to urge Congress to modernize Montgomery GI Bill education benefits.

The Partnership for Veterans Education, a consortium of military, veterans, and higher education associations (including MOAA), is pushing Congress to modernize Montgomery GI Bill education benefits.

Montgomery GI Bill advocates have been frustrated for years that MGIB benefits haven't kept up with the rising cost of education. Partnership participants say the program isn't living up to its purposes as a recruiting and retention tool and veterans' readjustment program.

While active duty, National Guard and Reserve forces are operationally integrated under the Total Force policy, their educational benefits are not integrated, and those benefits are no longer proportional to members' service. Tens of thousands of activated Guard and Reserve members haven't been able to use the education benefits they earned for their contingency service. Further, Guard and Reserve members can't use the benefit after fulfilling their commitment and leaving service.

Partnership members are seeking House and Senate sponsors for legislation to consolidate all active duty, Guard and Reserve MGIB programs under VA jurisdiction and align benefits with the length and type of service performed.

### **MOAA Legislative Update for Friday, January 27, 2006:**

#### Issue 1: Weapons vs. Health Care Debate Kicks Up a Notch.

House Minority leaders have fired off a letter urging the President not to jack up military beneficiary health fees to pay for weapons programs. MOAA also offers some perspective on weapons cost growth vs. health cost growth.

Since MOAA's January 13 alert about Defense leader's plans to triple or quadruple health fees for military beneficiaries, MOAA members have generated 22,000 messages to Congress.

Your efforts are starting to have some effect, as several senior leaders on the House minority side have sent a letter

to the White House urging President Bush to reject Pentagon plans to impose large health fee hikes on military retirees to help pay for weapons programs. In addition to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, those signing the letter include the senior Democrats on the Budget Committee (John Spratt, D-SC), Armed Services Committee (Ike Skelton, D-MO), Veterans Affairs Committee (Lane Evans, D-IL) and the Quality of Life and Veterans Appropriations Subcommittee (Chet Edwards, D-TX). View the letter (PDF).

Our hope is that there will be a bipartisan effort in Congress to recognize that people programs are as important as weapons programs, and that the former shouldn't be a bill-payer for the latter. But we need a barrage of grassroots inputs to Congress to make that happen. Please use the link above to send your legislators a message, if you haven't already done so.

In addition, please sign, stamp and mail the four tear-out letters that appear in the February MOAA magazine (reaching your mailboxes shortly). These letters are addressed to the senior leaders of the House and Senate Armed Services Committee, who will be the key players in this debate.

For those complaining about growing health care costs, MOAA notes that there have been similar or larger increases in the cost of many weapons systems. For example, the cost of a destroyer has risen 400% in the last two decades, and the cited cost of an F-22 has risen 500% since it was first proposed.

Military people are a weapon system too - the only weapon system that has never let the country down in any way.

Poor Pentagon financial and procurement management has been cited in study after study and generated scandal after scandal. The Pentagon needs to acknowledge its own management responsibility for rising weapons costs rather than trying to stick military retirees with the bill for them.

#### Issue 2: Disability Commission Coming to a Town Near You

The Veterans Disability Benefits Commission made public its anticipated field-hearing schedule on January 20th. The first city to be visited will be Tampa/St Petersburg, Florida on 15 -16 February and will include participation by the entire commission. The Commission plans two sessions that will be open to the public -- a "town hall" meeting the evening of the 15th and a public meeting scheduled for the 16th.

The Commission then plans to visit one city per month over the next eight months. At each of their stops, commissioners will meet with VA representatives, military treatment facility personnel, and interested veterans. The schedule includes visits to San Antonio (March) followed by Chicago (April), St. Louis (May), San Diego (June), Seattle (July), Boston (August), and Atlanta (September). We'll provide the specific dates as soon as they're available.

The Commission chairman, LTG James Terry Scott (USA-Ret), highly encourages interested veterans, retirees, survivors, and currently serving members to join them and be heard.

Many of the details are being finalized. Additional information on the Disability Commission and upcoming field hearings may be found at:

<http://www.vetscommission.org/index.htm>.

### Issue 3: MOAA Seeking Tax Break for Health Insurance Premiums.

MOAA and National Association of Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) have been teaming up to lobby legislators for pre-tax payment of TRICARE/FEHBP premiums and a tax deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums.

MOAA has long partnered with the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) to seek legislation that would allow pre-tax payment of TRICARE-related health and dental premiums for active duty, Guard, Reserve and retired military members and retired federal employees. Active federal employees have had this benefit since 2000. MOAA/NARFE efforts are focused on extending this same benefit to retirees.

Congressional champions Sen. John Warner (R-VA) and Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA) have introduced legislation to accomplish this (S. 484 and H.R. 994 respectively). Both bills would allow TRICARE dental premiums to be deducted from active duty pay on a pre-tax basis and allow similar deductions from retired pay for TRICARE Prime enrollment fees and the TRICARE retiree dental premiums. Federal civilian retirees could have FEHBP premiums deducted from retired pay. The bills also would allow a tax deduction for TRICARE supplemental insurance premiums.

### **MOAA's Legislative Update for Friday, February 3, 2006:**

#### Issue 1: Hill Staffers Question TRICARE Fee Hike Plan

At a TRICARE conference discussion forum on Jan. 30, Republican and Democratic staff members from the House and Senate Armed Services Committees told TRICARE officials that they shouldn't expect Congress to just roll over and accept the Defense Department's plan to impose significantly higher TRICARE fees on military retirees.

While they agreed that rising costs are a concern, several made it clear that many on the Hill don't share the Pentagon's view that the answer is to stick retirees with bigger bills.

The Senate staffers questioned the Pentagon analysis and expressed doubt whether private sector solutions (such as higher cost-shares) are the answer for the military situation. They also indicated the Pentagon hasn't won any points by failing to brief the Committee about the plan and the rationale behind it, and that Congress is already starting to receive thousands of letters from upset retirees. There was general agreement among all of the staffers on the panel that military retirees are different from civilians because they earn their benefit through a career of arduous sacrifice, including wartime service.

House and Senate staffers also agreed that more needs to be done to ensure there are enough providers participating in TRICARE - both TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Prime - to meet beneficiary needs.

We're pleased and appreciative that these key Committee staff members show a lot more sensitivity to military beneficiary needs than the Pentagon has, and that the fee hike plan is going to get an intense going-over when it arrives on Capitol Hill (which could be as soon as Feb. 6).

In the meantime, it's essential to keep up a sustained barrage of grassroots inputs to Congress over the next

several months. MOAA members can help that cause by signing, stamping and mailing the tear-out letters to the four top Armed Services Committee leaders that are enclosed in the February MOAA magazine (two at page 34 and two at page 50). You can add important extra emphasis to your letters with a hand-written "p.s."

### Issue 2: Medicare Payment Cuts Repealed, Again

The House reconvened on Jan 31 and voted on the budget savings package on Feb. 1 passing it by a slim margin.

Medicare will now automatically reprocess all claims filed since Jan 1. Medicare will then pay each doctor one check to make up the total difference for all claims filed since Jan. 1.

Medicare has acknowledged that it could take until July before all the claims have been reprocessed. Doctors who chose to stop seeing Medicare beneficiaries because of the temporary cut will be given a 45-day re-enrollment period to rejoin the program.

During this process, TRICARE continued paying at the 2005 rates, on the assumption that the legislation would be passed shortly after the House returned from its year-end break.

### **MOAA's Legislative Update for Friday, February 10, 2006:**

#### Issue 1: Dumping the Disabled Retiree "Back Tax"

Most VA disability claims filed by military retirees are resolved in less than a year. But lost paperwork, administrative errors, and appeals of rejected claims delay thousands of disability awards for years on end.

The VA disability award is retroactive to the date of the application -- making some portion of past military retired pay tax-free. But to get a refund of back taxes paid, disabled retirees must file an amended tax return for each applicable year.

That's when retirees run into a major problem: the IRS Code bars filing amended returns beyond the last three tax years. As a result, VA administrative glitches and insensitive tax laws cost these disabled retirees thousands of dollars through no fault of their own.

MOAA believes that this unfair situation should be corrected and has been seeking support for a legislative solution. Recently Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA) and Rep. Mike Bilirakis (R-FL) expressed interest in supporting this effort. On Thursday, Rep. Farr and Rep. Bilirakis introduced H.R. 4727 in a very positive step towards fixing this problem.

The bill, known as the Disabled Veterans Tax Fairness Act, adds an exception to the IRS statute of limitations that would allow disabled retirees to file amended returns for more than three tax years in cases where the VA approval is retroactive for more than that time.

Efforts are now underway to seek companion legislation in the Senate.

### **MOAA's Legislative Update for Friday, February 24, 2006:**

#### Issue 1: MOAA Briefs Hill Staffers

CDR John Class, USN-Ret., MOAA Deputy Director of Government Relations, conducted a special Capitol Hill

briefing for U.S. representatives' staffers on Feb. 24 to provide MOAA's perspective on DoD's proposal to increase military retiree health care fees.

The briefing outlined the specifics of the Pentagon plan to increase retiree health fees by 50% to 270%, depending on grade, and explained why MOAA believes this is the wrong approach. The briefing also addressed improvements that need to be made in TRICARE and a list of alternative options the Defense Department could pursue to reduce military health program costs without penalizing beneficiaries.

Staffers from 50 congressional offices attended. MOAA president Vice Adm. Norb Ryan Jr., USN-Ret., and the entire government relations staff were also on hand to answer questions.

"This is the major item on MOAA's legislative agenda this year," said Ryan. "With recruiting in trouble and retention at risk, the last thing we should be doing is cutting military retirement benefits by as much as \$1,000 a year. Why give already over-stressed mid-career servicemembers and families another reason to reconsider their military career decisions?"

#### Issue 2: COLA Watch

In mid February, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced the January 2006 monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is the metric used to calculate the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for military retired pay, VA disability compensation, survivor annuities, and Social Security.

The Consumer Price Index reversed the first quarter of the fiscal year's downward trend and rose 0.7 percent above the year's COLA base. The bulk of the fluctuation in inflation for the last several months - in both directions - has been due to fluctuations in energy prices. For more information on the subject, visit MOAA's website at

[http://moaaonline.org/ct/t1z\\_irK1Mz6C/](http://moaaonline.org/ct/t1z_irK1Mz6C/).

#### Issue 3: What's Your Take on Health Fee Increases?

MOAA President VADM Norb Ryan, Jr. (USN-Ret) will be meeting with Pentagon and Senate leaders next week to discuss DoD-proposed fee increases that would affect retirees under age 65 and pharmacy copay increases that would affect all beneficiaries except active duty members themselves.

If you have time in the next few days, we'd appreciate it if you could take one minute to fill out a three-question survey so we can get a quick pulse of our membership's views on these proposals.

You can review a summary of the proposed increases at [http://moaaonline.org/ct/57z\\_irK1Mz6Z/](http://moaaonline.org/ct/57z_irK1Mz6Z/) and then visit [http://moaaonline.org/ct/t7z\\_irK1MzOq/](http://moaaonline.org/ct/t7z_irK1MzOq/) to take the three-question survey.

ONE CAUTIONARY NOTE: You may experience some Web site delays in using these two links. We've noticed lately that our 130,000 subscribers are starting to max out our Web site capacity when we put a popular link in the update. We're

pursuing a new contract to increase our Web capacity and flexibility, but the full execution of the upgrade may take a few weeks. If that weren't enough, we've just begun executing a long-scheduled database upgrade that may also affect Web performance temporarily (see below). In the meantime, we ask you to bear with us. If it takes too long to load the information when you first try, please try again later after the peak "rush," as your input on this issue will be particularly valuable to us in the weeks ahead.

#### Issue 4: Key Senator To Seek SBP Funding

Ending the deduction of VA survivor benefits from Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments when the member died of service-connected causes continues to be a top MOAA goal.

A major obstacle has been the lack of budget "headroom" in the annual budget resolution. Our Senate SBP champion is trying to fix that so the issue can move forward.

Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) is writing a letter to the Budget Committee asking for allocation of budget authority for the Armed Services Committee to take positive action. But he needs other senators to sign the letter to increase its impact.

Last year, the full Senate voted to approve the measure, but the House refused to agree. Now, we need to prod senators to put their signatures where their vote was.

Please visit MOAA's Web site

([http://moaaonline.org/ct/5dz\\_irK1Mz6K/](http://moaaonline.org/ct/5dz_irK1Mz6K/)) and click on the "Sign Nelson SBP Letter" link to ask your senators to join Sen. Nelson in this request.

Again, please bear with us if the Web site loads slowly, and try back later if your first attempt doesn't succeed. Thanks in advance for your support of military widows.

#### Issue 5: Database Maintenance

MOAA is in the process of upgrading our membership database to provide better service. These improvements will affect some areas of our Web site,

[http://moaaonline.org/ct/tpz\\_irK1MzOa/](http://moaaonline.org/ct/tpz_irK1MzOa/), from February 22 through March 7.

You may experience poor site performance or be unable to access some areas of the site. Beginning March 7 you will need your email address to log into the MOAA Web site.

In an attempt to make login to the MOAA Web site more secure, we are switching your user name from your membership number to your email address. If you do not have an updated email address on file with us prior to February 22, you will be able to log in using your member number for a limited time.

If you do not have an email address, you will be required to obtain one if you wish to access member - and guest-protected content in the future. We will not distribute your email address to others nor will we send you unwanted email. Thank you for your patience as we work to improve our systems. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [http://moaaonline.org/ct/g1z\\_irK1MzOz/](http://moaaonline.org/ct/g1z_irK1MzOz/).





# JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA



A membership meeting will be held Tuesday, 21 March 2006, at the Lawrence Country Club.  
Dinner cost is **\$20.00** per meal.

**The Program:** **Raymond Geselbracht** of the Harry S. Truman Library & Museum in Independence will give a slide presentation on the places in and around Kansas City that were near and dear to Truman as well as some personal anecdotes about Truman the man.

**Social Hour:** 1800 hours

**Dinner:** 1900 hours

**The Menu:** *Chicken, baked potato, vegetable, rolls, salad, tea or coffee and ice cream*

Send your reservation and check payable to **Jayhawk Chapter MOAA** to arrive no later than 18 March 2006, to:  
CAPT (Ret) Jim Cooper  
1115 Stone Meadows Drive  
Lawrence, KS 66049-3961

If you have any questions, you may contact Jim at 842-7037 or John Halladay at 843-6184.

*cut here*

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Yes, please make \_\_\_\_\_ reservations for me and my guests. (Spouse and other guests are welcome.)

The cost is \$20.00 per meal. I am enclosing a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ for meal(s).

**ALSO ENCLOSED ARE MY DUES (\$20.00) FOR 2006** \$\_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \$\_\_\_\_\_

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Name

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Telephone

**Dinner reservations are confirmed on Monday before the Tuesday dinner. Cancellations, if necessary, should be made prior to Monday noon; otherwise, the Lawrence Country Club will charge us for those meals.**

## **BRING A GUEST !!!**

**TEAR OFF AND RETURN THIS FORM WITH A CHECK PAYABLE TO:  
JAYHAWK CHAPTER MOAA**

MOAA WEBSITE: [www.moaa.org](http://www.moaa.org)

JAYHAWK CHAPTER WEBSITE: [www.jayhawkmoaa.org](http://www.jayhawkmoaa.org)

We are still looking for members willing to receive the Newsletter by e-mail.

Postage went up in January.

If you received this issue by mail and would prefer e-mail, please let us know at

[jwhalladay@sunflower.com](mailto:jwhalladay@sunflower.com).

### 2006 MOAA Calendar:

Tuesday 21 March MOAA meeting

**Wednesday 17 May** MOAA meeting  
*(note date change)* Gen. Richard Myers

Tuesday 18 July MOAA meeting

Tuesday 19 September MOAA meeting

Tuesday 21 November MOAA meeting

***IF YOU NEED A RIDE TO MEETINGS, PLEASE LET US KNOW ON YOUR RESERVATION FORM***



*Newsletter Editor*  
*Jayhawk Chapter, MOAA*  
*2403 Manchester Road*  
*Lawrence, KS 66049-1646*

*Happy Easter*  
*from your*  
*Editorial Staff*